

Spotlight

on



DHHS

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Employee News

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From the desk of...

Commissioner Stephen



Many Challenges, Opportunities at DHHS

One thing I have learned at DHHS is that the only constant is change. Whether due to state legislative action, Congressional changes, federal regulatory policies or another of the many moving parts that affect our Department, we are always racing to keep up with new ideas and ways of doing our business. Watching the shifting landscape means that we must stay focused on changing methods while retaining our mission.

This past budget session has been no different. With the implementation of aspects of our GraniteCare initiative, we must modify some of processes to accommodate a new direction, particularly in terms of caring for the elderly. With stringent budget language limiting our personnel funding, we must find new efficiencies in how we deliver services so we can do

more with less.

Ultimately, the nature of DHHS is to adapt and improve ourselves to meet the challenges that we will always face. This is nothing new, but many who have worked here for many years have suggested that the pace of change is accelerating. This, in turn, means that the pace that we need to innovate must also quicken. To date, I have been tremendously impressed by our staff's ability to adjust how we create opportunities from these new challenges.

Our focus must always be on the citizens of New Hampshire whom we serve. The person on the street might not care that we are making internal changes that might be a big change for our staff in order to protect the public better from avian flu or EEE, they just want to know that someone is hard at work keeping them safe. At times, I person-

ally have fallen into the trap of asking what something might mean for DHHS and not for the citizens of the State and I have had to remind myself that our purpose is to serve the people, not the Department, as appealing as that might seem at times.

Flexibility is a key strength I have seen at DHHS. But, like a muscle, adaptability gets stronger the more you exercise it, and it will atrophy if never used. For that reason, I hope that you will keep an open mind at all times to continue to meet the changes that we face together as an organization.

More to the point, any organization that seeks to integrate change into the fabric of its culture must realize that many of the best ideas don't happen at the top level. That means that we need to build an environment where good new ideas are allowed to flourish. I have said that my door is always open for any employee to contact me with a thought or suggestion that will improve our performance. Feel free to email me at jstephen@dhhs.state.nh.us at any time to bring me your plan to make DHHS a better place.

Again, I want to thank you for being as open minded as you have been to change. I hope you keep this approach in mind as we face more and more challenges, and know that, in many cases, the best answers are already in the heads of our employees. Let's keep pushing ourselves to improve and make New Hampshire the best it can be.

Commissioner



*Wishing You
and
Your Family
a Happy, Healthy
New Year!*

In the News

Minority Health Office Awarded \$735,000 Grant

The State Partnership Grant Program has awarded DHHS' Minority Health Office (MHO) a five-year grant totaling \$735,000.

According to Bill Walker, MHO Director, "This is a very exciting time for our office and for the people of New Hampshire. This award will help the State in its efforts to reduce disparities in health outcomes for minority populations. It will provide opportunities to educate and orient our communities towards longer and healthier lives."

James "Jim" Fredyma Elected President of National Organization

At the recent annual conference of the National Association of State Human Services Finance Officers, James "Jim" Fredyma, DHHS' Controller, was elected President of the Association for 2006.

"The rest of the country has figured out what we have known for quite a while in New Hampshire," said Commissioner John Stephen. "Jim has done an outstanding job for DHHS for many years. This honor is justly rewarding the wonderful service he has given."



The National Association of State Human Services Finance Officers, founded in 1948, is a not-for-profit organization with 63 state and county government members.

"It is a great honor for Jim both personally and professionally to be recognized by his peers for his outstanding leadership in financial matters in public health and human services," Stephen added. "I couldn't be more proud for him."



At EAP's Open House on November 17th, Paula Nadeau-Booth, EAP Director, greets guest, NH Supreme Court Chief Justice John Broderick.

EAP Celebrates 20 Years of Services

In November, at an Open House in its new office space in the Thayer Building, the New Hampshire Employees Assistance Program (EAP) celebrated its 20th Anniversary of service to State employees and their families.

The EAP is a voluntary and confidential program established to assist State employees and their families deal with problems that affect their overall well being.

If you need someone with whom to talk over matters that are interfering with your work or home life, you can find a caring professional at the EAP, 271-4336.

We say a reluctant good-bye to Richard Kellogg who leaves DHHS to assume the position of Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services for the state of Washington. While at DHHS, Richard was instrumental in implementing the Department's GraniteCare initiative to have more seniors remain in their homes and in transforming mental health treatment into an evidence-based format.

With deep appreciation for a job well done, we wish Richard the very best in his new endeavor.



Hats Off!

Hats off to Claremont District Office staff who raised more than \$220 for David's House in Lebanon, New Hampshire. David's House is a home-away-from-home for children receiving treatment at Dartmouth Medical Center and their families.

Project Caring

This year, Project Caring, the Department's annual food drive for community-based food pantries, ran for three weeks in November. During that time, staff donated a total of 140 boxes packed with food, toiletries, and cleaning supplies to 19 food pantries throughout the State.

"This truly exemplifies our staff's kind generosity, caring, and outstanding community spirit," said Commissioner John Stephen.

Thanks to all who participated. You truly made a difference!



Special Delivery

Many thanks to Marc Guertin and Luis Jimenez, Bureau of Facilities and Assets Management, who delivered 82 boxes of food and other donated items to four pantries in the Concord area during DHHS' 2005 Project Caring.

Inside the ESU

We live in a dangerous world. A world in which floods, fires, droughts, blizzards, epidemics, power outages, and a host of other disasters often occur. And since nearly every disaster involves human life, it should come as no surprise that the Department of Health and Human Services - across every Division - is deeply involved with emergency preparedness and response activities. This includes our communicable disease staff, radiological staff, disaster behavioral health specialists, and inspectors (e.g., food, health facilities, child care).

Perhaps the least known response team is the recently revamped Emergency Services Unit (ESU), which reports to the Commissioner's Office. This unit is comprised of two specialized teams - the Evacuee Registration Team and the HazMat Support Team - and it also manages a small repository of supplies to be used by the Department in a disaster.

The Evacuee Registration Team (ERT) was originally established to help register and reunite people evacuating from around Seabrook Station and Vermont Yankee nuclear power plants in the event of an emergency. This activity takes place at five Decontamination/Reception Centers, which are located at schools in Rochester, Dover, Manchester and Keene. In the past year, the ERT has successfully participated in and passed three FEMA graded exercises.

The ERT has also enhanced its capabilities over the past year so it can respond to emergencies statewide. Thanks to the Office of Information Technology, the Team is the only one of its kind in the nation that uses wireless, portable laptop computers to operate the Reception Centers. Doing so significantly speeds up the registration process and enables evacuees to receive and leave messages for loved ones. Furthermore, it enables the Department to go 'mobile' if necessary and set

up a Reception Center anywhere in the State.

This nearly came to fruition in September in the destructive aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Commissioner Stephen offered the resources of the Evacuee Registration Team to FEMA. Although the Team was not deployed, it did subsequently assist in preparing a State Plan to turn the Pease Trade Port into a Reception Center after FEMA asked Governor Lynch to be ready to receive and relocate 500 - 1,000 hurricane victims.

As for the HazMat Support Team (HST), it is a group of women who are being trained to assist the State's existing eight District HazMat Teams with chemical, biological and radiological events. The reason the HST is all female is because children and women generally do not want to disrobe and be decontaminated in front of male first responders. To our knowledge, the HST is the Nation's only team trained to do these procedures - and all members are nationally accredited as being HazMat Operator Level Responders.

The HazMat Support Team received \$78,000 from a Homeland Security Grant this summer to begin equipping team mem-

bers with protective clothing, sensors, and decontamination equipment. Another grant is pending.

Regardless of which specialized team an Emergency Services Unit member joins, everyone undergoes extensive training as outlined in the ESU's brand-new curriculum, which was developed by DHHS Human Resources with input from the NH Fire Academy and the Bureau of Emergency Management. For instance, all members must be NIMS Certified - a new federal mandate - and they take a number of core courses, while team leaders take additional professional development courses. Additional workshops include such diverse topics as psychological first aid, leadership, and verbal judo.

Team members also now have 24-hour access to a secure website that contains training and reference documents they may need in a disaster. The website also has new items, bulletin boards, homeland security and emergency preparedness courses, and links to pertinent sites.

These are exciting times for the field of disaster preparedness. The Emergency Services Unit is presently looking to:

- Expand its overall membership to 300 team members;
- Preposition evacuee-registration equipment at strategic locations statewide;
- Adopt a computerized emergency alert-and-notification system;
- Explore creating a so-called 'Mass Care Support Team';
- Participate in several drills; and
- Undergo advanced training.

If you want to get involved and make a difference in someone's life in a disaster, consider joining the Emergency Services Unit. (FYI - There is a two-year commitment with a number of obligations.) You can find information on the Department's Knowledge Center. Just look for the 'first aid' button - a red cross on a white field. If you have any questions, please email Karen Blizzard Royce. The next round of training is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2006.

Stephen F. Tomajczyk
Emergency Preparedness Coordinator
Office of the Commissioner



Volunteer coordinator Betty Hughes (right) and Katie Martin (left) go over some procedures before a drill begins.



Louise Fontaine, a registrar at a reception center, pretends to be an evacuee to give a member of the decon team practice using a geiger counter.

In Appreciation

On November 28th, Commissioner John Stephen held a ceremony to recognize and thank staff for their outstanding services during the flooding crises in southwestern New Hampshire and in the Gulf Region states after Hurricane Katrina.

"Their voluntary response, as exemplified by their willingness to share their time and skills, reflects proudly on this Department, the State and, most importantly, on them as caring and giving individuals," said Commissioner Stephen. He also extended appreciation to the families of staff and co-workers for their support of those involved in these efforts.

According to the Commissioner, during the flooding crisis in our State, staff were involved in many activities, including:

- Staffing the State Emergency Operations Center;
- Covering the Flood Information Line each night, 8pm-8am, from October 12th through October 18th, and providing follow-up calls to address questions about flood-related losses;
- Packing and distributing emergency equipment to Department teams going to southwest New Hampshire, including preparing 1,050 water vials to be distributed to flood-affected towns so residents could have their water tested;
- Staffing Red Cross shelters and working at shelter service centers to assist victims by answering questions and accepting applications for assistance such as food stamps;
- Going door-to-door in flood affected areas to conduct medical service assessments and calling clients to assure their safety;
- Conducting a community needs assessment of Keene and Alstead;
- Providing assistance to child care facilities, nursing homes, and other health care sectors affected by the flooding;
- Checking the monitoring points for Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant in the Hinsdale area; and
- Providing staff involved with flood relief efforts with debriefing services, including calling staff at midnight to debrief them.

Commissioner Stephen also praised staff who went for two weeks to Gulf Region

states as Red Cross volunteers helping victims of the devastating Hurricane Katrina. In addition, the Commissioner gave special recognition to Assistant Commissioner Lloyd Peterson and Steve Tomajczyk, Emergency Services Coordinator, for their dedicated work and outstanding efforts in coordinating Departmental efforts during our response to the flood devastation in New Hampshire

Staff honored for their service include:

Heather Amer
Janet Andrews
Kathaleen Austin
Brandi Bedley
Frances Bergeron
Karen Blizzard Royce
Jon Bodwell
Deborah Bushey
Denise Corvino
Kathleen Cummings
Laura Desmarais
Ann Marie Durant



Charles Metcalf with Commissioner Stephen

Christine Gerhardt
Ann Glidden
Marylee Greaves
Mickie Grimes
Ransey Hill
Dee Houle
David Hughes
Penny Hull
Susan Jackson
Debra Jacobs
Cricket Johnson
Lois Kelly
Wendy Kessler
Carolyn Killian
Marcia Kong
David Lake
Rupa Laverdiere
Cynthia Learson



Mickie Grimes with Commissioner Stephen

Viola Lewko
Dorris Longdon
Debbie Marsh
Kathleen Martin
Charles Metcalf
Wendy Misek
Sherri Mohan
Marat Morrill
Eileen Mullen
Paula Nadeau-Booth
Ellen Neilley
Melissa Nicols
Dennis O'Dowd
Tracey Osgood
Rachel Plotinsky
Rose Pound
Thomas Pryor
Paul Raiche
Cherylyn Randolph-Lebrun
Victoria Raymond
Ken Roos
Michelle Rosenthal
Donna Seader
Elizabeth Sharp
Maureen Stephens
Edward Tasker
Deborah Taylor
Rhonda Thomas
Elizabeth Thompson
Diane Viger
Joyce Welch
Sandra Weld
Kathleen Willett
Sharon Wogaman
Catherine Woods



Christine Gerhardt



The following four pages (5-8), contain thoughts, insights and remembrances of staff who spent time in the southwestern part of New Hampshire during and after the flooding disaster and in the Gulf Region states after Hurricane Katrina.

In New Hampshire...

The Division of Public Health Services Food Protection Section (DPHS FPS) exists to help protect the safety and security of the food supply and responds to emergency situations that affect the food supply. For this reason, FPS inspectors were deployed to the western part of the State after flooding ravaged that area.

Food service establishments in the vicinity of the Shaw's Plaza in Newport, New Hampshire were mostly affected by the flood and subsequent power outages. Four inspectors from Food Protection arrived on scene shortly after the flooding. This was much to the relief of all of the business operators who were anxious to clean up and resume normal operations. The primary role of the inspectors was to determine what food items were deemed unfit for consumption and to see that these items were appro-

priately disposed of. Business operators were very cooperative. As a result, FPS inspectors were able to visit most of the affected businesses the same day, which allowed for these establishments to clean up, restock and reopen.

Food establishments in Acworth, Alstead and Walpole were spared from flood damage but were affected by the power outage. Some of the establishments in these towns had emergency plans that minimized their loss of product.

*Joyce Welch,
Food Protection Section*

Footnote: The Food Inspectors Surveyed 302 food establishments in record time and assisted in inspecting and re-opening establishments. The majority of food establishments were operational in less than a week's time.



Flood damage and empty shelves at Shaw's in Newport, NH.



My experience with volunteering, as a representative of DHHS (and as a nurse) assisting the Red Cross with relief efforts during the October flood disaster in New Hampshire, allowed me, quite simply, to implement the language of our Department's mission and to "walk the talk" of people helping people.

It was truly a blessing to be assigned as a frontline healthcare worker, acting as an integral member of a disaster relief team, in canvassing flood-affected neighborhoods of Alstead, Hinsdale and Stoddard. It wasn't anymore basic than asking residents who were impacted by flooding how we could help with immediate needs and doing all we could to meet them. It didn't involve lengthy discussions or complicated contracts, but knowing with hearts and minds that even the simplest need met would be incredibly helpful and much appreciated. Working with the State's most precious commodity – its people – under these extreme circumstances reminded me of our resiliency and determination. It also reminded me of how much we, as people of the northeast, can and will turn to each other for help when events like this occur.... and not come away empty handed.

*Dee Houle, RN
DCYF, State Office/Brown Building*

As a nurse and part of a team of four Red Cross Volunteers in the field, we were assigned areas in the inner town of Keene to check up on specific flood victims. What I received from each victim was far more than what I felt I could have given each of them. I saw in each person sincere appreciation, gratitude, hugs for each of us, tears and determination to overcome such devastation that affected each of their lives. Sometimes when we think we are giving of ourselves, we end of receiving so much more.

*Cheryl Randolph LeBrun, RN
DCYF, Concord District Office*



In New Orleans...

by *Karen Blizzard-Royce - Bureau of Administration*
and *Laura Desmarais - WIC Program, Division of Public Health Services*

We had the honor and privilege of representing the Red Cross, our State and serving the people of Louisiana in their time of need. The experience was more than we ever expected and we walked away better people for having done it.

We began our journey by staying in a staff shelter of approximately 90 volunteers in New Orleans. (Biggest PJ party we've ever been a part of.) The snoring ranged from baritones to sopranos. Earplugs were a must. HazMat showers were available outside the shelter on a city street in New Orleans where security was essential.

Our primary assignment was in Food Service Operations where we were part of a mass stationary feeding site, which operated out of the Belle Chasse Baptist Church in Belle Chasse, Louisiana. The operation consisted of the Southern Baptist Convention being responsible for cooking lunch and dinner each day for residents who were unable to cook for themselves due to loss of power, water and/or their home.

As Red Cross volunteers, we were responsible for the distribution of food to people through a drive-through operation that fed thousands of people daily. Many of the people who came each day had just recently returned to the State since being evacuated and wore their heart and emotions on their sleeves. As we saw many of the same people each day, we learned of their personal tragedies such as loss of home/family/friends, separation from friends and loved ones, and/or stories of their narrow or miraculous escape from death.

Many Red Cross volunteers wore Mardi Gras beads to honor the residents and over time residents brought them to us as an appreciative gesture. It meant so much to us as we knew it came from the heart and it was one of the few personal items they could resurrect from their



Laura Desmarais (left) and Karen Blizzard-Royce (right) stand ready to help in New Orleans

ruins.

We also had the opportunity to go out on the Red Cross' Emergency Response Vehicle, which is a mobile feeding vehicle used to go door to door to feed people in highly devastated areas. No Red Cross class could have prepared us for what we saw. It literally looked like a bomb had gone off for miles on end. Complete towns and cities were totally flattened. There were personal belongings strewn in trees, front lawns, etc. Houses, miles from their original location, had addresses spray painted on them indicating where they should be returned.

The people we interacted with were just amazing. They were completely gutting out their homes from the inside out and attempting to rebuild their homes and lives. To us it appeared senseless due to the extreme structural damage, but to many, it was the only home they knew and they



Photo taken by Laura of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina

could not consider living anywhere else.

Although the days were long, the work emotional and physical, it was an experience we will never forget. We were inspired by the grateful and gracious personalities of the people we met and we are glad we had the opportunity to make a difference. It is a comfort to know that Hurricane Katrina did not taint the southern hospitality.

This opportunity would not have been possible without the support of our Supervisors and co-workers. THANK YOU SO MUCH!

To sum up our experience best "It is the hardest job you'll ever love to do."

In Mississippi...

by *Debbie Marsh*
Bureau of Improvement and Integrity

On Wednesday, August 31, 2005, two days after the "worst natural disaster to hit American soil," I boarded a plane to Montgomery, Alabama. Armed with an American Red Cross (ARC) debit card, rubber boots, bug repellent, sunscreen, a variety of warm weather/protective clothing and a telephone number to call for recorded instructions upon arrival in Montgomery, I embarked on a journey into the unknown.

American Red Cross Headquarters was set up in an abandoned former Kmart building in downtown Montgomery. Upon my arrival on Thursday, our group was informed that the immediate focus would be Mass Care. The extent of damage in the Gulf Region had not been determined. The first deployment had occurred on Wednesday and headquarters had no contact with those deployed. We were instructed to purchase sleeping bags, mats, bug repellent, sunscreen, and were given

Mississippi
Con't. on page 7

*Mississippi
Con't. from page 6*

three days worth of water and heater meals. We were to withdraw a substantial amount of cash using our ATM cards and keep our rental vehicles filled with gasoline at every opportunity available.

Our group of 26 volunteers set out from Montgomery, Alabama, in caravan fashion for Meridian, Mississippi, 160 miles away and inland 150 to 200 miles from the Gulf Coast. We were welcomed with open arms at the Key Chapter House and given a situation briefing. The path of the hurricane traveled through Meridian, knocking down trees, ripping off roofs, and knocking out electricity in its wake. A multitude of Gulf Coast evacuees were arriving at Chapter House and were directed to a local shelter. Our sleeping quarters were set up in a church and we were fortunate to have air conditioning and hot showers. We shared the church with the Southern Baptist team that arrived from South Carolina.

The Southern Baptist volunteers were a large group of shining spirits who had arrived the previous day with their mobile kitchen, showers, and laundry facilities. Their mission was to provide hot meals to hurricane survivors and volunteers. Volunteers came from miles away—Mennonites, a young newlywed couple still on their honeymoon, couples with young children, extended families, teachers, attorneys, ministry groups—to assist the Southern Baptist in their mission.

As a “National” Red Cross volunteer coming in to assist the local chapter, it soon became apparent that the Meridian community was determined to provide for those in their care without National’s assistance. After being turned away from three separate shelters and reporting for other fruitless assignments in the course of four days, my co-volunteer, Loretta, and I made the decision to return to headquarters for reassignment to a region that would better utilize our offers to help.

Accepting a position in Family Services, I traveled to Mobile, Alabama. A group of 15 to 20 National members set up a service center in a local union hall to offer assistance with food, shelter and medical needs. The first two days were spent assisting evacuees. The process consisted of interviewing individual family units to determine shelter, housing and medical needs. Because of the

magnitude of the disaster, money in the form of disbursing order was distributed. The disbursing orders were determined based on the number of household members. Nursing and mental health staff was close by in the service center for immediate assessment and consultations.

We had minimal supplies available for



In November, Commissioner Stephen presented Debbie with a Certificate of Appreciation for her outstanding disaster relief efforts.

our use. ARC client assistance cards were replaced with disbursing orders to be cashed by a designated bank. Official ARC forms detailing specific household member information and disaster effects were replaced by photocopied forms requiring only name, address and signature. Decisions were being made based upon limited staff and supply availability, rather than the predetermined procedures as detailed in the classroom training sessions I had previously participated in.

During the interview process, I had the opportunity to listen to the stories of the survivors. There was the 24-year-old single mother of two who was also bringing up her two teenage sisters. During evacuation through chest-deep water, the family was separated. After two sleepless nights on a bridge and searching relentlessly for her three-year-old son, her best friend in Mobile located him at the Astrodome in Houston. Using her own life savings, the friend managed to reunite the family at her Mobile home. As we spoke the young child clung to his mother with eyes wide and weary. The large bruise on his forehead was the physi-

cal evidence of the trampling he endured at the Astrodome. The emotional bruise he hid inside.

On day three in Mobile our mission’s focus changed. Although Mobile was not directly in the hurricane’s path, there was now a National declaration that “anyone living in the appointed zip codes was eligible for financial assistance.” This caused a dramatic influx in the number of citizens requesting monetary assistance. We were faced with thousands of local residents lined up at the entrance to the service center. Our mission changed to financial disbursement only. Tempers flared and crowd control became impossible. With police and National Guard protection, we worked relentlessly. Managers, nurses, and mental health professionals joined the family assistance volunteers and

worked from early morning to late night to complete the financial distribution. The day before my departure, relief arrived—65 new volunteers—a gift from above.

With a heavy heart, I completed my two-week assignment and returned to New Hampshire. As the country continues to rebuild the ravaged region, I await the opportunity to travel once again to the Gulf Coast and provide help, hugs, love and hope.

Warm Clothing Drive a Success



Kudos to the students and staff of the Tobey School on the success of their warm clothing drive. Through the generosity of DHHS staff, 22 large bags of clothing were sorted, packed and delivered to agencies in the Concord area.

In Houston...

by Ken Roos, Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services

I would have given any of my prized possessions four years ago and again two years ago to have been there when the Patriots won the Superbowl, respectively, in the New Orleans Superdome and again in Houston's Reliant Park. At least that's what I thought then, before a population about equal in number to the city of Concord was forced to give up all their prized possessions and escape to the Superdome during Hurricane Katrina. You all know the story. From there, disaster victims were transported 360 miles

away to the old Astrodome in the shadows of the new Reliant Park. I arrived at the Astrodome as a Red Cross volunteer less than a week after the Hurricane. By that time, the number of evacuees had already been cut

in half as additional shelters were set up in Houston and other parts of the country. But what these individuals went through, and many are still experiencing, is beyond anything I can imagine. Most lost everything except what they could carry. Many lost family members, which was especially heart wrenching when small children were involved. Conditions were better at the Astrodome, but cots were crowded together. Privacy and personal space were nonexistent, and public health hygiene was a major concern.

At the Astrodome, command was initially a joint multi-agency function and then, over time, it passed from one agency to another. The functions being handled by the Red Cross were shelter, clothing, medical triage, and logistics.

When I arrived, the staffing function had not yet been set up so I was directed to the shelter floor, with no specific assignment. I found my way to the central information desk where I learned that there was no efficient system in place for family members to locate one another. That then became

my function. The biggest problem in the family reunification function was getting the databases that were set up by various entities, including the Red Cross, Yahoo, Microsoft, and site-specific registration data, to talk to each other so that meaningful searches could be made.

In order to control access to the shelters, residents were provided color-coded bracelets that needed to be changed each time they moved from one shelter to another. While an initial paper registration was

obtained, this information was not immediately entered into a database nor updated when residents found subsequent housing options. This resulted in an inability to locate and track evacuees, security

problems, and basically a lot of confusion and frustration among an already stressed population. A registration process quickly became an additional major responsibility of our unit.

One of the most touching sights I witnessed was in the computer center where we tried to connect individuals with their family all over the United States, many of whom were evacuees as well. When they successfully reunited family members, a bell was rung. Initially, the bell rang just a few times an hour and everyone in the room would cheer and hug. By the time my two

week tour was completed, the room sounded like the fire engine ride at Canobie Lake Park. The system worked!

Simultaneously wearing my Disaster Planning hat, I continuously tried to transport this situation to New England. How successful would we be in evacuating the city of Boston, or even a New Hampshire community? (Unfortunately, this was played out during the floods that hit the southwest corner of our State a month later, when we saw the impact of individual human decisions sometimes yielding devastating results.) Would you stay or flee? What would you take? I saw one woman in the Astrodome whose worldly possessions now consisted only of her Beanie Baby collection, which she proudly displayed on her cot. How would you flee... together as a family or everyone driving a separate car? What route would you take? Where would you meet and how would you contact each other? Numerous questions need to have immediate answers, necessitating pre-planning, not only by those of us involved in the State's Emergency Preparedness function, but by YOU as a potential disaster victim.



View inside the Astrodome



During those first few weeks, evacuees living in the Astrodome were visited by such notables as Senator Hilary Clinton, Oprah Winfrey and heavy-weight boxing champion Evander Holyfield. At a wedding that took place at the Astrodome, Evander Holyfield gave the bride away. Check to see who's walking down the aisle behind the bride and Evander...none other than our own Ken Roos.



In the midst of personal sorrow and loss, people found solace and joy in music.

New Initiatives Support Adult Protection

The Elder Abuse Advisory Council is launching a public education campaign aimed at helping people better recognize and understand the signs of elder abuse, the responsibility to report it under the Adult Protection Law (RSA 161-F: 42-57) and where to get help.

Commissioner John Stephen established the Elder Abuse Advisory Council earlier this year to help improve the protection of New Hampshire seniors from abuse, neglect and exploitation by:

- Increasing public education and awareness;
- Developing resources, supports and services;
- Improving community relations; and
- Examining and recommending legislation.

"Elder abuse is a growing problem in our State that must be addressed. No older person should live in fear, be abused, or not receive the care they need," said Commissioner Stephen.

In State Fiscal Year 2005, DHHS' Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services (BEAS) received 2,222 protective reports of which 1,450 involved alleged victims 60 years of age and older.



The Adult Protection Law (RSA 161-F: 42-57) requires that anyone suspecting or believing in good faith that an incapacitated adult is abused, neglected, exploited, self-neglecting or living in hazardous conditions must report it to BEAS. BEAS investigates, determines whether the report is founded, and, when necessary, offers services to protect the adult.

The new educational materials developed by the Elder Abuse Advisory Council include a poster, a Law Enforcement Resource Guide, a brochure and a business card containing information on where to report elder abuse. The new materials will be introduced and distributed in early 2006.

The Advisory Council's education campaign will also include using newspaper articles, TV and radio spots to publicize information about elder abuse, and legislators will be invited to do public service announcements on this issue. Outreach is also planned to service providers, businesses, family caregivers, and senior groups.

In addition to the Law Enforcement Resource Guide, a training curriculum for law enforcement officers on dealing with elder abuse is being developed, and will eventually be presented to the New Hampshire Police Standards and Training Office for their consideration.

There will be a review of the ongoing training and support needed by BEAS staff who receive, investigate, and intervene in reports of abuse, neglect, exploitation or self-neglect, and coordinate protective services. Such ongoing training and supports are critical, given the complex needs of adult abuse victims, and the legal and ethical issues that often arise.

Proposed legislation supported by the Advisory Council includes two bills that will be considered during the 2006 session.

◆ One bill would establish a separate legislative committee to study the benefits of conducting a statewide review of all unanticipated fatalities and incidents of serious injury to incapacitated adults, and to individuals aged 60 and older.

◆ The second bill would limit public access to documents filed in certain proceedings before the Probate Court. Currently, when an individual's estate is being pro-

bated, anyone can ask to see a list of the individual's assets. However, if this bill passes, access would be limited to requestors who can demonstrate good cause as to why they should have the information.

The Elder Abuse Advisory Council is comprised of 41 members, including legislators and representatives from the legal system, law enforcement, and the health and social service fields. The Council is chaired by Marguerite Wageling, Hillsborough County Attorney, and Jo Moncher, Chief of DHHS' Bureau of Community Relations. DHHS staff members serving on the Elder Abuse Advisory Council include:

Douglas McNutt, *Administrator of BEAS;*

Lynn Koontz, *Administrator, BEAS Adult Protection Program;*

Don Rabun, *Long -Term Care Ombudsman;*

Mary McGuire, *General Counsel for BEAS;*

Robert Ehlers, *Administrator, Bureau of Health Facilities Administration;*

Susan Godin, *BEAS Supervisor, Berlin District Office; and*

Valerie Garner, *Adult Protective Services Social Worker, Nashua District Office.*

Margaret Morrill
Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services

Our society must make it right and possible for old people not to fear the young or be deserted by them, for the test of a civilization is the way that it cares for its helpless members.

Pearl S. Buck



West Nile Virus and EEE in New Hampshire



We all knew with the warmer weather the mosquitoes would return. Unfortunately, this year the little biting menaces brought Eastern Equine Encephalitis with them, better known as EEE, and West Nile Virus (WNV) returned as expected. These are both neurological illnesses caused by a virus spread by the bite of an infected mosquito.

The wet spring weather likely contributed to the active season, which included seven human cases of EEE and two deaths in New Hampshire. There were also fifty-four positive birds identified with EEE, including two emus, nine horses, four alpacas, one llama, and fifteen mosquito pools. In 2004, there was one human case, three emus, three horses, and nineteen positive mosquito pools.

"What we have to remember among all this bad news," said Dr. Jose Montero, State Epidemiologist, "is that this is a preventable illness. EEE and WNV are only transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. If we can prevent mosquitoes from biting people, we can prevent

this illness." The mosquitoes become infected by biting an infected bird. They can then transmit the virus to mammals, such as humans and horses, and other birds.

The symptoms of WNV and EEE are similar, though EEE can cause a more serious illness. The risk of contracting either illness is low, and in the majority of cases there are only mild symptoms. If illness does occur, it happens within 3 to 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. The first



symptoms usually include fever, headache and lack of energy. In severe illness, patients have a high fever, stiff neck, severe headache, and sometimes neurological problems such as confusion, coma, convulsions, and death.

The most important precaution to take against WNV and EEE is wearing an insect repellent with DEET during the times mosquitoes are biting, especially dawn and dusk when they are most active. Oil of

lemon eucalyptus and picaradin have also been shown to be effective repellents. Wearing long pants and sleeves when possible, eliminating standing water in your yard, and ensuring that window and door screens fit properly are important precautions also. Mosquitoes can breed in standing water in as little as five days.

"While there is no vaccine or treatment for West Nile Virus fever or Eastern Equine Encephalitis," said Montero, "common sense precautions, which we should all be taking routinely, are extremely effective in preventing illness. We should enjoy all that New Hampshire has to offer, but take the right precautions, as we would with any activity from skiing to driving a car to sunbathing. It is simply a new dynamic of the world we live in that we need to wear insect repellent when we are outdoors."

Commissioner Stephen has created a EEE Task Force composed of public health officials, state and local elected officials, DHHS staff, and others to look at a number of areas, including legislation, outreach, and special populations, to reduce the threat of EEE in New Hampshire.

*Nicola Whitley
Public Information Office*



DPHS Receives Hepatitis B Award



The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) Division of Public Health Services was recognized as a leader in the prevention of perinatal (from the mother to her baby at birth) transmission of hepatitis B by the National Immunization Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). New Hampshire was recognized for achieving the highest rate among states for complete blood testing of infants born to hepatitis B-infected mothers in 2003. New Hampshire received this award at the National Hepatitis Conference held in Washington D.C. in early December.

"This is a serious illness and we want to make sure that infants born in New Hampshire have the best start possible in life," said DHHS Commissioner John

Stephen. "The Perinatal Hepatitis B Program in New Hampshire achieved a 90% rate of complete blood testing of infants in 2003, which is a huge step toward preventing the transmission of hepatitis B."

Hepatitis B virus infection is a known cause of both acute and chronic hepatitis and liver cirrhosis and is the cause of up to 80% of liver cancers. Hepatitis B is also a vaccine-preventable disease. Perinatal transmission of hepatitis B can be prevented if a pregnant woman who is infected with the hepatitis B virus is identified before delivery. The New Hampshire Perinatal Hepatitis B Prevention Program focuses primarily on ensuring the testing of all pregnant women for hepatitis B virus and the appropriate treatment of infants born to hepatitis B positive women or to women whose hepatitis status is unknown.

"The New Hampshire Perinatal Hepatitis B Program is designed to identify pregnant women who are carriers of the hepatitis B virus," said Dr. Jose Montero, State Epidemiologist, "and to thus prevent their newborn infants from becoming infected. We expect that an estimated 36 to 54 infants are born each year in New Hampshire to women who are chronic carriers of the hepatitis B virus."

It is critical for infants born to these mothers to get hepatitis B immune globulin and their first dose of hepatitis B vaccine within 12 hours of birth, to complete their 3-dose hepatitis B series on time, and to have a blood test done to show that they are protected from getting the disease.

Congratulations to the DPHS for their great work!

About The Bureau of Community Relations

The Bureau of Community Relations was established 17 months ago by Commissioner Stephen to help facilitate communications and partnerships between the Department and the community. The Bureau includes Jo Moncher (Bureau Chief) and four Community Relations Managers who cover various regions of the State: Natalie Allen (Belknap, Merrimack and Lower Grafton Counties), David Roy (Carroll, Coos and Upper Grafton Counties), Germano Martins (Hillsborough County), and Diana Smith (Strafford and Rockingham Counties). Natalie Allen is covering Cheshire and Sullivan Counties until the Community Relations Manager position for that area is filled.

All Community Relations Managers have extensive experience with DHHS in addition to their leadership and team-building skills. Within the areas they cover, they work closely with the District Offices to implement DHHS goals and objectives. They also meet frequently with many agencies and organizations in their areas, providing information on DHHS services, and assisting in the development of initiatives that help strengthen the social service network.

According to Jo Moncher, who coordinates the work for the Bureau, "Together, these Community Relations Managers have a total of over 100 years of experience working with the State. They have a tremendous knowledge base of our programs and services. I encourage DHHS staff, who have not done so, to connect with our Managers and introduce them to their community partners."

Community Relations Managers often help individuals to navigate the service system and work with various organizations on a wide range of issues, e.g.:

- ◆ Working with local Area Committees on Aging or Elder Wrap teams;
- ◆ Promoting early learning readiness programs for children;
- ◆ Raising public awareness about preventing domestic violence in the workplace; and/or
- ◆ Working with a District Office to streamline assistance to refugees.

Community Relations Managers also represent the Department in responding to specific concerns in their areas. For example, when the Car Components Technology plant in Bedford closed, 566 employees lost their jobs. Most of these now former employees are immigrants who do not speak English and live at poverty level.



Pictured at the Job/Resource Fair for former employees of Car Components Technology are (left to right) Wanda Vega, (Family Finance Specialist, Nashua District Office), Germano Martins (DHHS Community Relations Manager), and Shelly Rusinski (Family Finance Specialist, Manchester District Office).

Germano Martins represented DHHS at the Rapid Response initiative and is currently networking successfully with other agencies to assist these individuals.

Diana Smith provided coordination and support to New Hampshire's delegates to the White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA). The 2005 WHCoA, which took place in December, is the fifth of such conferences. There, 1200 delegates from across the country voted on resolutions and developed implementation strategies that will help the President and Congress shape aging policies for the next ten years and beyond. Diana set up meetings, coordinated communication, and supported our State's delegates as they prepared for this important event.

On the refugee front, there will be a relocation of 90 Mesketian Turks from Russia to Laconia within the year. Community members are working collaboratively with Lutheran Social Services to resettle the refugees.

Natalie Allen has been instrumental in setting up procedures for interviews at the Laconia District Office. Natalie also meets regularly with Lutheran Social Services to streamline procedures, especially around the use of interpreters.

David Roy serves as the liaison to the North Country and travels about 40% of his time. His most recent project includes joining the District Office on a partnership with Northern Human Services of Colebrook, North Country Cares and RESPONSE on a Video Conference Pilot Project. The project goal is to bring the services of DHHS to the people of the North Country using video conferencing – saving clients the challenge and cost of driving to the District Office.

Understanding, navigating and operating within the service system of the State can sometimes be overwhelming for many consumers and provider groups. The Bureau of Community Relations tries to make this communication process easier while improving and increasing partnerships in the community.

Look for more updates about the Bureau of Community Relations in future editions of the Employee Newsletter.

*Jo Moncher, Bureau Chief
Bureau of Community Relations*

Blood Drive

According to Heidi Savoy, NH Hospital Volunteer Coordinator who oversees DHHS Blood Drives, DHHS staff donated a total of 242 usable pints of blood at four Blood Drives conducted in May, July, October and December of 2005. The Blood Drive in December was dedicated to Tiffany Hope Matthews, whose parents work for the State.

According to Heidi, the next Blood Drive will be on March 13th.



Senior Wellness Initiative

In December, at a press conference held at the Ingram Senior Center in Salem, the Department joined State legislators, senior advocates, senior center directors and others to announce the kickoff of the State's Senior Wellness initiative. The Senior Wellness initiative, included in the State budget, provides grants for senior centers in New Hampshire to develop and expand health and wellness programs for seniors, including fall prevention, exercise and nutrition activities.

"This initiative is targeted to improve the quality of life for the seniors of our State," said DHHS Commissioner John Stephen. "The primary goal of our Department is prevention. Whether we are talking about avian flu, EEE or other public health threats, our GraniteCare initiative

for Medicaid, the Granite State Fit Kids program or Senior Wellness, we keep our focus squarely on the idea of prevention. It is easier, less costly and better to prepare for something before it becomes an issue than to try to fix a problem before it becomes a crisis."

State elected officials attended the event, including Senate Finance Chairman Chuck Morse of Salem, Executive Councilor Ruth Griffin and Salem Representative Russ Ingram, who, with his wife, donated \$500,000 to the Salem Senior Center. "Senior centers have always served to promote the overall well-being of our seniors, and the further promotion of wellness activities at these Centers was a priority for us during the budget," said Senator

Morse. "The legislature knows the value these centers provide and the opportunity they present to help keep the seniors of New Hampshire healthy."



Getting Fit..Staying Healthy

The Division of Public Health Services' Health Promotion Program has a number of resources available for children and adults to help them live a healthier lifestyle and reduce the risk for chronic disease. While resources are traditionally used in population based settings—schools, worksites and communities—many of the activities can be adapted for individual use.

Within the last year, DHHS employees have received monthly "Health Promotion in Motion" emails that include tips for staying active throughout the year. Employees located at Hazen Drive have access to monthly messages, ideas and recipes found on the cafeteria bulletin board. And, some employees have benefitted from the DHHS "Challenges to Living a Healthier Lifestyle" presentation. This training helps individuals learn about the many obstacles to eating healthy and increasing physical activity, and how to begin to make lasting lifestyle changes. Many of these re-



sources can be found on at the Health Promotion link on the DHHS website at www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/NHP/physical-activity.htm or contact slsmith@dhhs.state.nh.us for more information.

Many children and families benefit from the school-based KidPower! Program in New Hampshire. KidPower! teaches children and families how to increase physical activity outside of school; how to make healthier food choices; and provides hints for reducing "screen time" for children and adults. Resources include a quarterly seasonal newsletter, an activity logbook and pedometer,

and resources for starting and supporting safe walking and bicycling to school. The activity logbook is used to guide children toward selecting an activity goal, to record their activity over a four-week period, and provides ideas, encouragement and lessons

for children to establish healthy habits early in life. Check out KidPower! at www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/NHP/physical-activity.htm or contact rflynn@dhhs.state.nh.us for more information.

Prevention works for everyone...regular activity, healthy eating, not smoking and getting routine health exams. **Try the first step today.**



Celebrating Adoptive Families in New Hampshire

On November 17th in the State House Executive Council Chambers, Governor John Lynch and DHHS Commissioner John Stephen were joined by adoptive and foster families and legislators in a celebration of adoptive families in New Hampshire.

Governor Lynch proclaimed November as Adoption Awareness Month, saying that children-in-waiting need to be adopted by capable parents who can provide them with a permanent home and the opportunity for continued happiness and long-range well-being.

Commissioner Stephen reaffirmed the Department's commitment to getting children-in-waiting into adoptive homes in a timely manner. "All children deserve to be raised in nurturing families that love them and have their interest at heart," said the Commissioner. "For some children, adoption is

their best chance for a happy, healthy life and a future of promise."

The Honorable Judge John Maher spoke, addressing his commitment to work with courts toward the goal of increasing the number of adoptions in New Hampshire.

Paul Desmarais, an adoptive parent and president of the New Hampshire Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (NHFAPA), and Nancy Myette, an adoptive parent of six children, each spoke about the joy and love that comes from being an adoptive parent.

According to Mr. Desmarais, when someone says they aren't sure they have enough love in their heart to adopt, he answers that the real question is if you have room in your heart to receive more love that comes when you adopt.

The event was organized by the Division for Children, Youth and Families, with toys and refreshments for the children and families donated by: Fiesta Toys, Hannaford Supermarket (Concord), Manchester Fire Department, Manchester Monarchs, NHFAPA, Stonyfield Farm, The National Adoption Day Coalitions and Wendy's Restaurant (Concord).



Kevin attended the celebration with his adoptive family.



Mary Breen (left) pictured with Cathy Atkins (right) at the MARE Awards ceremony.

Mary Breen Recognized for Her Dedication to Children-in-Waiting

The Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) presented Mary Breen with its first out-of-state award for Outstanding Dedication and Commitment to Waiting Children. Mary was recognized for her dedicated work and collaboration with MARE on behalf of children-in-waiting.

Mary, who has been with the Department for 17 years, works in DHHS' Division for Children, Youth and Families Adoption Program. In her position, Mary brings new recruitment and post-adoption opportunities to New Hampshire. According to Catherine "Cathy" Atkins, who heads up the Adoption Program, "Mary's commitment, professionalism and skills in collaborating truly show in all of the work that she does."

Adoption/Foster Care Community and Faith-Based Initiative

The Community and Faith-Based Initiative is moving forward in New Hampshire! On November 22nd, a kick-off gathering was held at Grace Capital Church in Pembroke. Members of community and faith-based organizations joined staff from the Division for Children, Youth, and Families, foster and adoptive families and Child Placing Agency staff for this historic gathering.

The goal of the Faith-Based Initiative is to forge stronger partnerships between community and faith-based groups and the New Hampshire Department of Health and

Human Services' Division for Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) in order to better meet the needs of children and families in New Hampshire.

Community and faith-based organizations are an invaluable resource to welcome children into the community and to support foster or adoptive parents in the daily roles they have embraced by opening their hearts and homes.



Faithfully, One by One

The Faith-Based Community Initiative is being led by Bethany Christian Services through a contract awarded by DCYF.

Thanks to Jan Lessard of Bethany Christian Services for her input on this article.

What Team Work Accomplishes

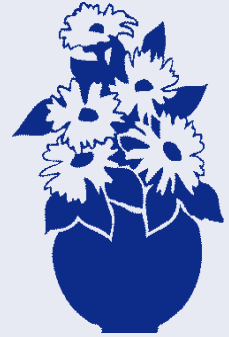


Front Row (left to right): Kurt Ekstrom, James Cavallini, and Ron Gibeault

Back Row (Left to Right): John Mahon, Kim Malm, Jennifer Ordway, and Jennifer Elliott

In December, when 18,000 pieces of mail needed to be sent out as soon as possible to inform Medicaid participants about the Medicare Part D prescription drug program, dedicated DHHS staff pitched in, above and beyond their daily busy workload, and got it done. Within 48 hours, 18,000 pieces of material were printed, folded, enclosed in envelopes and mailed. Many thanks to all, including Jen Ordway who coordinated the effort and Jayme Kennedy of Graphic Services who made this printing need a top priority. Great work, team!

Congratulations to Sue Johnson, Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services, who recently successfully completed all requirements and passed the qualifying exam to become a judge for the National Gardener Clubs of America and its international affiliates. This now enables Sue to judge flower shows at a national level.

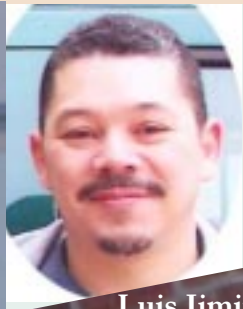


According to Sue, "Gardening is a wonderful hobby that you can do your whole life and it costs almost nothing. A garden club is a wonderful way to meet people of all ages."



If you are interested in joining a garden club, be sure to contact Sue.

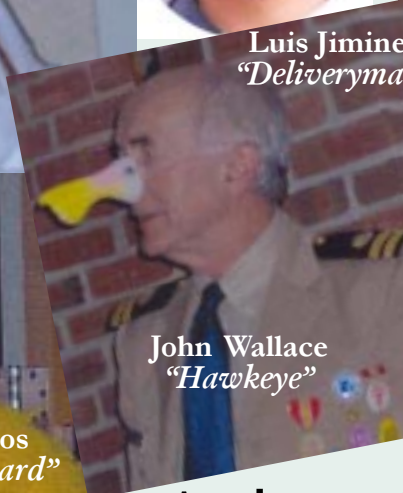
John Harrington
"Phoenix"



Karen Hildreth
"Avis"



Luis Jiminez
"Deliveryman"



Alyssa Pockell
"Raven"

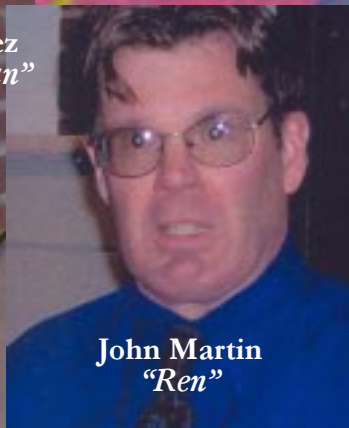


Ken Roos
"Dr. Mallard"

John Wallace
"Hawkeye"



John Martin
"Ren"



Mike McGeehan
"Sylvester"



Frank Danieli
"Hawkeye"



Diana Lacey
"Robin"



Applause, Applause!

Revenge of the Birds

Kudos to John Wallace (writer, producer and director) and staff on a stellar production and performance of this year's holiday-time skit. It was clever, entertaining and just plain funny. Thanks for adding to the joy of the holiday season.



Milestones

Welcome to the following individuals who joined the Department in December:

Edward Cartier

Mental Health Worker Trainee

Marissa Morse

Medical Services Consultant I

Maureen Ryan

Program Planning and Review Specialist

Karen Song

Institutional Staff Development Coordinator

Ann Marie Tate

Child Protective Service Worker I

Farewell and our deepest appreciation for a job well done to **Arthur Bonaceto**, who retired in December.

Congratulations to the following individuals who reached milestones in State service in December:

TEN YEARS

Donna Amyot

Janet Andrews

Lu-Anne Boucher

Dawn Brown

Claire Carraher

Marylynne Chavanelle

Michael Fitzpatrick

Janet Smith

William Watson

FIFTEEN YEARS

Kathleen Desmarais

Nancy Flaherty

Linda Pivin

Holly Wentworth

TWENTY YEARS

Elaine Ciechon

Dennis Silva

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

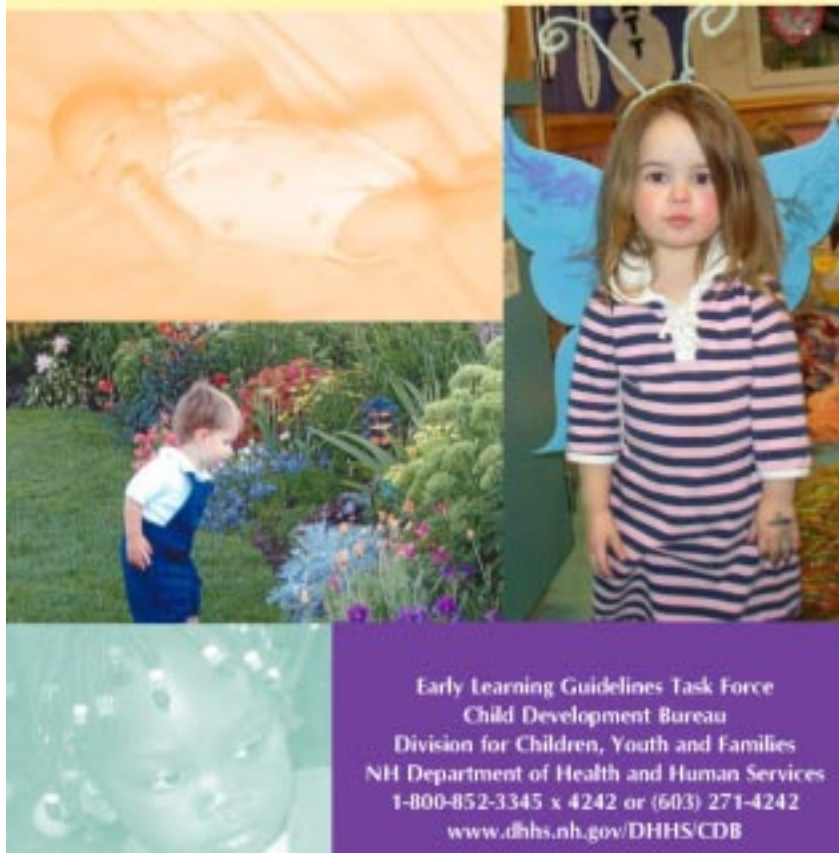
Joseph Crowley

Elizabeth Jewell

Gail Jones

Colleen Nault

New Hampshire Early Learning Guidelines



Early Learning Guidelines Released

In November, the Division for Children, Youth and Families' Child Development Bureau released the *New Hampshire Early Learning Guidelines*. The *Guidelines*, which address learning and development appropriate for children from birth to entrance into kindergarten, was written by members of the NH Early Learning Guidelines Task Force. It is the result of a highly collaborative effort of leaders in early childhood, with teachers, parents, grandparents, early childhood program directors, in-home providers, service providers and interested community members across the State reviewing the draft *Guidelines* and helping to shape their development.

The *Guidelines* are a tool to encourage active participation of families, early childhood educators, community members, advocates, policymakers and others involved in the care, education and development of young children.

An electronic copy of the *Guidelines* will be going up on the DHHS website in the near future.

Licensed Plus! The New Child Care Quality Rating

The Bureau of Quality Improvement and Integrity is pleased to announce that it will be implementing this winter a new initiative to recognize those child care programs which are exceeding licensing requirements and are meeting research-based

criteria for child care quality. Programs must meet sixteen standards in addition to licensing to qualify.

All licensed programs in New Hampshire are eligible to apply for Licensed Plus, and those programs that are certified by DCYF to serve children in protective and preventive care will be eligible for cash awards.



Parents will be able to find out about Licensed Plus programs in their communities by accessing the DHHS website or contacting the Child Care Resource and Referral agency in their home communities. Programs will be able to display their certificates and logos, as well as advertising their new status.

“I am delighted that the Department will be recognizing those child care programs which are working on improving their quality beyond our Licensing standards,” said Linda Paquette, Administrator of the Bureau of Improvement and Integrity. “We know that quality child care programs are critical to the success of our families and that they improve the



If you'd like to suggest a topic or submit an article for **Spotlight on DHHS** or you know of an award or accomplishment of a staff person, send an email to the Public Information Office.